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->From the Editor's Keyboard                "Saying it like it is!"
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It's been a relatively quiet week, for a change.  Minimal family issues to
have to deal with this week, although they are there.  The weather hasn't
been all that great, but I did manage to get in a little yard work; a good
diversion.

Unofficially, we're into the summer starting this weekend: Memorial Day
weekend.  This is the time when barbecue grills are readied for a weekend
of grilling, the coolers pulled out of their hiding places and filled with
ice and beer.  Winter longjohns are replaced with teeshirts and shorts.
It's a great time of the year when we can "officially" shake off the
doldrums of winter.  And for us here in the Northeast, that's a huge relief!

In light of all that, we here at A-ONE want to remind you all, that during
this long holiday weekend, to be responsible out on the roads.  Please,
stay safe, for your sake and mine!

Until next time...




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->In This Week's Gaming Section   - New Xbox: What s Better, What s Missing
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""    Xbox One Game Discs for Initial Installation?

                                    Atari Seeks Court Approval for Sale of Assets
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   -  The Latest Gaming News!
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                      New Xbox: What s Better, What s Missing
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Eight years after the debut of the Xbox 360, Microsoft has announced the Xbox One. While it s no quantum leap forward in gaming, it is attempting to tackle one of the biggest problems we face in our living rooms: a fractured landscape of devices that don t play nicely together and require WAY too many remotes.

Xbox One Specs

•   8 times the computing power of the previous Xbox 360

•   500 GB Hard Drive

•   8 GB Memory

•   Built-in Blu-ray DVD player

•   Kinect will come standard with every Xbox One

•   Kinect redesign with larger field of view, 1080p HD Camera, enhanced gesture recognition, and improved array microphones for voice control

•   Gaming Controller redesign: more distinct d-pad design, tactile feedback (rumble) Impulse Triggers and Wi-Fi Direct connectivity to the console.

The new Xbox One represents an upgrade rather than an overhaul on physical design, internal horsepower, and social connectivity. But it is making an innovative play for entertainment dominance.

The One looks like a TiVo or set top box. It has HDMI in and out, so it will take the HD input from your cable or satellite box, combine that with the One s built-in Blu-ray DVD player, an Internet connection and, of course, game play to overlay and switch quickly between entertainment options.You can watch a live sporting event while checking your fantasy stats online.You can play a game and Skype. You can watch a Blu-ray and check Facebook. This combined use on one screen is what sets the Xbox One apart from other consoles and entertainment devices.

The promise is that you can do all those things on one screen without switching inputs and using one remote. But that mandates the Xbox One play nice-nice with all the cable and satellite boxes   which is no small feat.
 The demo at the Xbox One debut used a Comcast cable connection, but it s unclear which providers will sign up to partner with Microsoft on the integration.

There is an infrared out jack on the Xbox One, which may be the default solution to remotely control 3rd party set top boxes,but the proof of this bid to take over the living room will have to be field tested extensively to see how it plays in the real world.

Because every Xbox One will ship with a Kinect motion gaming controller, gesture is built into the controls for both games and entertainment.
 Swipe up to scroll and grab and pan were both demonstrated to control screens and inputs. The Kinect will also have improved microphone arrays for improved voice control.

If the Xbox One becomes your pass-through hub for entertainment, it will need to be always on. If you ve ever forgotten to turn your Xbox 360

off, you know this is an issue because it sounds like a blender;it s LOUD. So Microsoft execs made a distinct point that the Xbox One is nearly silent.

The presentation of the Xbox One focused on entertainment for the first 30ish minutes, and gamers were screaming via Twitter and live blogs about Microsoft s lack of attention to the actual game play. But when Microsoft did turn the focus to gaming, they highlighted iterative changes to the hardware: larger hard drive (500 GB), more memory (8 GB), improved controller (smaller battery, better d-pad, Wi-Fi Direct connection to the console). When they finally turned to specific games and graphics improvements, culminating in the announcement of the next Call of Duty franchise (Call of Duty: Ghosts), Activision highlighted the improved facial nuances, more lifelike skin of characters, and even the fur and expressions of the COD dog.

Call of Duty: Ghosts will debut on the Xbox One, but is not necessarily exclusive to the Xbox One. And comparing the graphics demo for the Xbox One to the Playstation 4 graphics demo (scroll to 1:18:00 in the linked video), you can see that the entire industry is moving forward in real-time rendered graphics, and this distinction between the platforms seems less relevant than the distinction between their overall entertainment features.

Rumors That Didn t Pan Out

Has to be connected to the Internet to function?

Microsoft has confirmed that local games will play when offline. You don t need to be always connected to play but you do need an Internet connection. One touted Internet-based aspect of the new gaming system is that developers will be able to use Microsoft's Azure cloud computing service and the company has increased their cloud computing servers from 15,000 to a seriously robust 300,000 servers.

Will not play used or previously owned games?

Microsoft has confirmed the XBOX One will play previously-owned or shared games

Kinect will recognize facial expressions like smiling or frowning?

No mention of that in the presentation although it s pretty cool that in fitness games Kinect can read your heart-rate and now has increased recognition of wrist and shoulder movement.

Projected games or augmented reality glasses that work with gesture control?

It sounded too good to be true but this rumor based on patents was not mention of those features.

Will play Xbox 360 games?

Sadly it won t. Microsoft spokespeople have confirmed that the Xbox One will not be backwards compatible with Xbox 360 games. There is a possibility of emulators or cloud-based versions of previous games.

Unanswered Questions

Price? Not mentioned but $399 to $499 seems to be the likely range

Release Date? Sometime this year.

How many models? Not mentioned, but to stay attractive to casual gamers and entertainment minded users a lower end model (smaller hard drive, fewer gaming features) would seem to be a sure thing.

Cable and satellite provider compatibility? Not disclosed.

Other titles? Shown at the Xbox One launch we saw new titles from EA Sports: FIFA, Madden, NBA Live and UFC. A peek at Forza Motorsports 5, Quantum Break, from Remedy, and Call of Duty: Ghosts. Microsoft promises more title info at the E3 gaming conference in June.

         Xbox One Game Discs Are Only Used for Initial Installation

Microsoft's Xbox One will use Blu-ray discs for games, but you won't be using them as frequently as you might have with your PlayStation 3. In a statement made to Wired, Microsoft said that all games are installed to the Xbox One's hard drive to play; you won't have to insert the disc to run the game after that initial process. The news confirms earlier information seen by The Verge.

Prior to the Xbox One's official unveiling, rumors had flown for months that Microsoft's latest console would contain a mechanism to block used games. While Microsoft has so far stayed quiet on this particular point, the mandatory installation would seem to suggest that there may have been at least some truth to the reports.

Microsoft has said that a fee will be charged for any game disc to be tied to a second Xbox Live account after its initial installation. This is likely to limit the market for second-hand games, but would not eliminate the possibility altogether. The company is yet to confirm whether players will be able to play games from disc or run them on secondary accounts without paying for the installation, nor has it given any indication of what the fee may be.

As for the rumors that claimed the Xbox One would require a constant online connection to run games, Wired says the reality is not as overbearing. Developers will be able to create games that hook into Microsoft's Azure cloud services and are unable to be played offline, but there is as yet no requirement for them to do so.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
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     Video Game Maker Atari Seeks Court Approval for Sale of Assets

Video game maker Atari Inc is seeking court approval for the sale of all
its assets as it works its way out of bankruptcy protection.

The company said on Tuesday it tried looking for a buyer with the help of
its investment banker Perella Weinberg Partners, but was unable to find a
"stalking horse," or initial bidder, acceptable to it.

Atari has set a minimum bid of $15 million for the Atari brand. The
company received a $5 million debtor-in-possession financing from Alden
Global Value Recovery Master Fund LP.

The video game maker, known for classic titles such as Pong, Asteroids,
Centipede, filed for bankruptcy protection early this year along with its
French counterpart, Atari SA.

The case is In Re: Atari Inc, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Southern District of
New York, No:13-10176.

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                         A-ONE's Headline News
                    The Latest in Computer Technology News
                        Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

             Ireland Says Will Not Be U.S. 'Whipping Boy' on Tax

Ireland's finance minister said the country would not be the "whipping
boy" for what he called a flawed U.S. Senate report that said Irish
loopholes helped technology giant Apple shrink its tax bill.

Ireland has been forced to defend its corporate tax rate after the Senate
said on Monday that Apple paid little or no tax on tens of billions of
dollars in profits channeled through Irish subsidiaries and that it had
negotiated a special corporate tax rate of less than 2 percent.

While a cabinet colleague acknowledged on Wednesday that there needed to
be a clampdown on multinationals shifting profits around the world to
avoid tax, Michael Noonan went on the attack, telling senators they had
got their sums wrong.

In an angry exchange at a parliamentary committee meeting, the finance
minister accused a fellow legislator of putting the jobs of people in the
country at risk by repeating the Senate committee's claims.

"I do not want to be the whipping boy for some misunderstanding in a
hearing in the U.S. congress," Noonan said in his first comments on the
subject since the hearings.

"The central point the committee proceeded to speak of was an Irish special
tax rate of two percent or less. The two-percent annual rates are got by
dividing the tax charged by branches in Ireland by the entire profit of
the companies concerned. This is clearly wrong and misleading."

The U.S. investigation showed that the iPhone maker had paid tax worth just two percent of $74 billion in overseas income, largely helped by Irish tax law, which allows companies to be incorporated in the country without declaring taxes there.

The Senate subcommittee identified three Irish-registered Apple subsidiaries that have no tax residency in Ireland. One of these, a holding company that includes Apple's retail stores throughout Europe, paid no tax at all in the last five years.

Repeating a message from ministers and officials that the Irish tax system is transparent and that no company has ever been given a special deal, Noonan said Apple's arrangement was simply a matter of tax planning by a company who had found a gap to exploit between two different tax jurisdictions.

The subcommittee said as much, he added, when it noted that the Apple subsidiaries concerned, registered in the Irish county of Cork, were neither tax resident in Ireland nor in the United States - where foreign corporations need not declare taxes.

Responding to a questioner who said Apple's tax rate bordered on magic, Noonan replied: "Maybe there was a magician, but the magician wasn't living down in Cork. Because they are not tax resident in Ireland, they are not liable to Irish tax."

Other European governments, notably France, have previously criticized Ireland's low rate of corporation tax - 12.5 percent - but the revelations from Washington focus on loopholes in the Irish tax code that Dublin is finding it harder to defend.

Richard Bruton, the minister in charge of attracting foreign companies like Apple to invest in Ireland, said companies need to be reined in: "They play the tax codes one against the other; that is tax planning, and I think we do need international cooperation through the OECD to deal with the aggressive nature of that," he told state broadcaster RTE.

Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny steered a careful path on Wednesday, saying on his way to a European Union meeting on tax avoidance that Dublin was helping lead a drive for a new international consensus on tax regimes for multinationals.

Unlike some other low business-tax economies, many with tiny populations, Ireland is heavily dependent on foreign companies such as Google, Pfizer and Intel for its export-led growth and for employment - foreign firms employ some 150,000 Irish people out of a workforce of under 2 million.

While Ireland has successfully repelled attacks on its corporate tax rate from European neighbors, U.S. pressure is more difficult to ignore.

By closing its own loopholes, Washington could threaten Ireland's status as European hub for U.S. multinationals, and economists said it would be better for Ireland to act first.

"In the long run, the U.S. Congress, if they wanted to, could wipe out those 150,000 real jobs, and we don't want to provoke people by over-egging it, by doing things that are clearly upsetting the U.S.," said John FitzGerald of Irish think-tank the Economic and Social Research Institute.

Bruton said scapegoating individual countries was not the answer and noted fierce competition Ireland faces in trying to attract companies: "When I go into the boardrooms either in Asia or the U.S., I am followed into those boardrooms by Swiss, by Singaporeans, by Dutch, by Belgians who are offering specially put-together deals on the tax front," he said.

"We make no apologies for having a regime that is designed to promote employment. It is a regime we have had for close to 50 years."

Google Faces New Federal Antitrust Probe

U.S. regulators are in the early stages of an antitrust probe into whether Google Inc, the top player in Web display advertising, breaks antitrust law in how it handles some advertising sales, a source told Reuters on Thursday.

The source said that it was unlikely that the Federal Trade Commission had sent out civil investigative demands in relation to the probe, which would be the sign of a formal and more serious investigation.

The new line of inquiry focuses on tools acquired when Google bought display ad company DoubleClick in 2007; other firms which specialize in helping Web publishers sell ads to put on their websites are complaining to the FTC, the source said.

The firms have accused Google of leveraging some of its most popular DoubleClick products, such as the ad managing system which has an estimated 80 percent of the market, to push websites to use other products, including Ad Exchange where websites swap ads, the source said.

According to a second source familiar with the situation, Google has not been notified of any antitrust investigation so far. Google and the Federal Trade Commission declined comment on the matter.

The sources did not want to be named in order to protect their business relationships.

The FTC wrapped up an earlier investigation into Google just four months ago, concluding that the search giant had not manipulated its Web search results to hurt rivals.

Google was the number one player in the $15 billion U.S. display ad market in 2012, with a 15.1 percent market share, compared with Facebook Inc's 14.6 percent share, according to industry research firm eMarketer. Google is expected to widen its lead to 20.7 percent of the market in 2014.

Google is currently trying to convince European antitrust investigators to wrap up a separate antitrust probe, and has offered to change some search pages to give more space to rivals in order to satisfy their concerns.

In that case, Google is accused of hiding links to rival shopping, travel and other websites to protect its ad revenues. On April 11, it said it would offer consumers links to three rival sites in some searches and would label its products.

'Irrational' Hackers Are Growing U.S. Security Fear

Cybersecurity researcher HD Moore discovered he could use the Internet to access the controls of some 30 pipeline sensors around the country that were not password protected.

A hacking expert who helps companies uncover network vulnerabilities, Moore said he found the sensors last month while analyzing information in huge, publicly available databases of Internet-connected devices.

"We know that systems are exposed and vulnerable. We don't know what the impact would be if somebody actually tried to exploit them," said Moore, chief research officer at the security firm Rapid7.

U.S. national security experts used to take comfort in the belief that "rational" super powers like China or Russia were their main adversaries in cyber space. These countries may have the ability to destroy critical U.S. infrastructure with the click of a mouse, but they are unlikely to do so, in part because they fear Washington would retaliate.

Now, concerns are growing that "irrational" cyber actors - such as extremist groups, rogue nations or hacker activists - are infiltrating U.S. systems to hunt for security gaps like the one uncovered by Moore. These adversaries may not be as resourceful, but like Timothy McVeigh's bombing of an Oklahoma federal building in 1995, it is the element of surprise that is as concerning.

Former U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said he was worried the first destructive cyber attack on U.S. soil might resemble the Boston Marathon bombings in the sense that the suspects were not on the government's radar.

"You are going to get relatively modest-scale, impact attacks from all kinds of folks - hactivists, criminals, whatever," Chertoff said at the Reuters Cybersecurity Summit last week. "Are they going to take down critical infrastructure? They might."

Emerging cyber actors that security experts say they are most concerned about include Iran, believed to be behind the ongoing assaults on U.S. banking websites, as well as a devastating attack on some 30,000 PCs at Saudi Arabia's national oil company last year.

North Korea is also quickly gaining cyber skills, experts say, after hackers took down three South Korean broadcasters and two major banks in March.

Another emerging actor is the Syrian Electronic Army, an activist group that has claimed responsibility for hacking the Twitter accounts of major Western media outlets, such as the Associated Press last month, when its hackers sent a fake tweet about explosions at the White House that briefly sent U.S. stocks plunging.

The U.S. power grid is the target of daily attempted cyber attacks, according to a report by California Representative Henry Waxman and Massachusetts Representative Ed Markey released at the House Energy and Commerce Committee's cybersecurity hearing on Tuesday.

More than a dozen utilities report daily, constant or frequent attempted

attacks, ranging from unfriendly probes to malware infection, according to the report.

Gerry Cauley, chief executive of the North American Electric Reliability Corp, told the Reuters Cybersecurity Summit that computer viruses have been found in the power grid that could be used to deliver malicious software to damage plants. NERC is a non-profit agency that oversees and ensures the reliability of bulk power system in the region.

Experts say that with so many unknown hackers trying to infiltrate U.S. industrial control systems, they fear someone somewhere - perhaps even an amateur - will intentionally or unintentionally cause damage to power generators, chemical plants, dams or other critical infrastructure.

"Even if you don't know how things actually work, you can still wreak havoc by crashing a device," said Ruben Santamarta, a senior security consultant with IOActive. "Probably in the near future we may face an incident of this type, where the attackers will not even know what they are doing."

Santamarta has identified hundreds of Internet-facing control systems - on the grid, at water treatment facilities and heating and ventilation systems for buildings including hospitals. He has also uncovered bugs built into industrial control equipment.

The Department of Homeland Security's Industrial Control Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team, known as ICS-CERT, last week warned of a flaw that Santamarta found in equipment from Germany's TURCK, which is used by manufacturers and agriculture firms in the United States, Europe and Asia.

The agency said attackers with "low" hacking skills could exploit the flaw, letting them remotely halt industrial processes. It advised customers to install a patch that would protect them against such attacks.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told a Senate committee in March that "less advanced, but highly motivated actors" could access some poorly protected control systems. They might cause "significant" damage, he warned, due to unexpected system configurations, mistakes and spillovers that could occur between nodes in networks.

ICS-CERT posts dozens of alerts and advisories about vulnerabilities in industrial control systems on its website each year. Companies whose products were named in their alerts include General Electric Co, Honeywell International Inc, Rockwell Automation Inc, Schneider Electric SA and Siemens AG.

Dale Peterson, CEO of industrial controls systems security firm Digital Bond, said infrastructure control systems are highly vulnerable to cyber attacks because designers did not take security into consideration when they developed the technology.

While hackers have yet to launch a destructive attack on U.S. infrastructure, plenty have the skills to do so. "I would say it is only because no one has wanted to do it," said Peterson, who began his career as a code breaker with the National Security Agency.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers said terrorists are among the groups looking to acquire the capability to launch a cyber

attack on U.S. infrastructure, but he believes they do not yet have that
ability.

"You get the right person with the right capability committed to this and
it's a game changer," Rogers told the Summit. "My concern is it's just a
matter of time.'

Eric Cornelius, a former ICS-CERT official, said that operators in
critical sectors including power, water, oil and gas sometimes do not
implement security fixes recommended by equipment and software
manufacturers in a timely manner because they need to take plants off
line to do so and cannot afford the downtime.

Some plants lack sufficient security staff and technology to protect
networks because they don't have adequate funds, said Cornelius, director
of critical infrastructure for Cylance Inc.

A relatively unsophisticated hacker whose goal was to probe a network
could unintentionally damage a system because aging networks are fragile
and extremely sensitive, he said.

"That leaves these control systems insecure," he said.

Russia's Leading Social Network Banned by "Mistake"

Russia's leading online social network was briefly banned on Friday, in a
move dismissed as a "mistake" but which follows intensifying official
pressure on the company as President Vladimir Putin consolidates his power.

VKontakte (www.vk.com), Europe's largest homegrown social network with 210
million registered users, was put overnight on a "black list" of sites
barred from distributing content inside Russia. Hours later, the ban was
lifted.

The company's founder Pavel Durov has clashed with the authorities in the
past for providing a forum for opposition activists to organize protests
against Putin.

"This happened by mistake," said Vladimir Pikov, a spokesman for
Roskomnadzor, the state communications regulator.

"In this case, someone checked a box against the address of the social
network. The site has been removed from the list and restrictions on
access to it have been lifted."

Durov, 28, founded VKontakte in his native St Petersburg in 2006 and his
success in building the network - which attracts 47 million users daily
who log on to share news, views and photos - has drawn comparisons to
Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg.

Durov refused to comply with an order by the Federal Security Service, a
successor to the Soviet-era KGB, to close groups used by activists to
organize protests over the December 2011 parliamentary election, which
handed victory to Putin's ruling United Russia party.

Last month, he was implicated in a traffic incident in the city of St.
Petersburg in which a policeman was slightly injured.

Durov has denied being involved in the accident but, instead of agreeing to testify as a witness, he left the country, say sources who know him. He has not been seen in public or posted on his VKontakte page since April 24.

The executive's difficulties coincided with a change of ownership at the company, in which a private equity fund with Kremlin connections bought a 48 percent stake from the founding partners who backed Durov.

The day before the deal closed on April 17, VK's office and Durov's home were searched by investigators.

The buyer, United Capital Partners, controls assets worth some $3.5 billion and is run by financier Ilya Sherbovich, who sits on the board of three large state firms including Rosneft, the oil major run by Putin's former chief of staff, Igor Sechin.

"It's a meticulous and methodical effort to bring the network under the control of the Kremlin," science fiction writer and blogger Dmitry Glukhovsky, creator of the Metro 2033 video game, told Reuters this week of the pressure on VK.

"It's too important a resource to stand independently from the 'siloviki'," added Glukhovsky, referring to Putin's allies that share the Russian leader's security-service background and are now in the political ascendant.

Sherbovich, in an interview, has denied fronting for the Kremlin and said he wanted Durov to stay on as chief executive of VKontakte.

A source close to the company said it held a board meeting in Switzerland this week which was attended by Durov.

Durov owns 12 percent of VK, but under a shareholder pact he also votes on behalf of the 40 percent holding owned by Mail.ru, the London-listed internet group backed by Uzbek-born tycoon Alisher Usmanov, Russia's richest man.

No comment was immediately available from representatives for VK, United Capital Partners or Usmanov.

At issue, say internet watchers, is control over user-generated content frowned on by the authorities. Friday's ban, despite being quickly lifted, could be a shot across VKontakte's bows to ensure it tightens its monitoring.

The network has also been accused by Russia's ombudsman for children's rights of hosting child pornography. At least one of the Boston Marathon bombing suspects had a page on VKontakte.

After Putin rose to power in 2000, the Kremlin reined in Russia's print and broadcast media, encouraging trusted business "oligarchs" to buy strategic stakes. A similar scenario, in which loyal investors ensure internet content is screened, may now be unfolding, say some commentators.

"All big media have been brought under the control of the Kremlin, and VK is the last medium that is free," journalist Nickolay Kononov, author of biography "The Durov Code", said in a recent interview.

R.I. House Delays Vote on Social Media Privacy Bill

Rhode Island lawmakers have put off a vote on legislation that would stop
employers or higher education officials from demanding access to a
person's Facebook or Twitter accounts.

The House was scheduled to vote Wednesday but decided to wait to allow for
more work on the legislation.

The measure is sponsored by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy. Kennedy says he
wants to prevent employers or school coaches from requiring access to a
person's social media accounts as a condition of their employment or
enrollment.

The bill would prohibit employers and college officials from requiring
that an employee or student add them as a social media contact. It would
also stop them from demanding a student or employee's login information.

California already has a similar law.

China's Surprisingly Open Hacking Culture

Although the notion has been proved laughably wrong on more than one
occasion, in the U.S., the term "hacker" can still conjure up shadowy
images of cyberpunk wizards pressing keys in front of glowing terminals.
That's not the case at all, though, at least not in China. The loose
categorical term "hacking" is treated with surprising levity, whether it's
recording your neighbor's keystrokes, or hiring freelancers to hack a
rival businesses' network to steal a peek at their financials.

According to The New York Times, "the culture of hacking in China is not
confined to top-secret military compounds where hackers carry out orders
to pilfer data from foreign governments and corporations." Instead, the
practice is commonplace, openly discussed "at trade shows, inside
university classrooms and on internet forums."

The Ministry of Education and Chinese universities, for instance, join
companies in sponsoring hacking competitions that army talent scouts
attend, though "the standards can be mediocre," said a cyber-security
expert who works for a government institute and handed out awards at a
2010 competition.

Corporations employ freelance hackers to spy on competitors. In an
interview, a former hacker confirmed recent official news reports that one
of China's largest makers of construction equipment had committed
cyber-espionage against a rival.

The Times suggests that hacking can be something of a lucrative   and
perhaps viable   career in China, even if you don't want to work for the
government. For the right privately owned company, a computer wizard can
use his or her skills to earn $100,000 a year.

Yet China's relaxed attitude toward cyber-espionage could partially
explain why U.S. companies have been the targets of a growing number of

hacks from overseas. Earlier this year, The New York Times fell victim to a critical infrastructure breach, which security experts traced back to Shanghai and the People's Liberation Army, which was purportedly gathering intel regarding a Times story set to be published about top-ranking Chinese officials.

Indeed, the threat of cyber-warfare is a growing concern domestically. Out of fear of an imminent, serious cyber-attack   or perhaps one that's already underway   The Verge reports that a former group of government officials and private executives are calling on Congress to "consider passing laws allowing U.S. companies to 'counterattack' against such hackers, whoever they may be."

The controversial idea of giving U.S. companies legal protections to "hack back" against intruders on their networks has been proposed before by some legal experts and companies, and some companies are even alleged to already be engaging in the practice, despite the fact that there is no legal framework in the U.S. permitting it. But the new recommendations from Huntsman's group may be the highest-profile yet, as they come from former Obama Administration officials.

To its credit, "China has said that its government is not the hack-happy entity that the U.S. says it is," CNET notes. In fact, Chinese officials claim that the "U.S. and other foreign governments have made attempts to hack into [China's] systems and networks." It seems the hacking goes both ways.

PayPal To Increase Marketing This Year for Offline Push

PayPal, the online payment operation owned by eBay Inc, will increase marketing spending to support its push into physical stores, President David Marcus said on Tuesday.

"You'll start seeing us amping marketing up later this year," Marcus said in an interview with Reuters.

PayPal is trying to become a common way of paying in physical stores, a much larger market than its online roots. The company expects to be in 2 million merchant locations by the end of 2013 and it is working on ways to persuade consumers to use PayPal rather than their usual credit and debit cards.

Customers would use PayPal via smartphone app. In addition, shoppers at the checkout counter can use PayPal by typing in a mobile phone number and a four-digit PIN that has to be set up online beforehand into the merchant's system. They can also use a PayPal card that links to their account.

"Swiping a card in a store is not hard," Marcus said during a meeting earlier on Tuesday with reporters at PayPal's headquarters in San Jose, California. "We really have to bring a lot of value to consumers to change that behavior."

Marketing will be a big part of this push. PayPal has already run several online video ads starring movie actor Jeff Goldblum to promote its payment service.

EBay ran a big TV ad campaign in 2011 which helped revive its online

marketplace. EBay waited to fix consumer problems with the marketplace
before it spent heavily on such marketing and PayPal's Marcus is taking a
similar approach now with the expansion into stores.

"We want to make sure we have enough density of consumer experiences
before we do a lot of marketing," Marcus explained. "We have really only
one chance at this and we do not want to disappoint customers."

PayPal has been testing a way for customers of smoothie store Jamba Juice
to order ahead using PayPal's smartphone application and pick up their
drinks at a separate line.

PayPal has been testing this at seven Jamba stores in the San Francisco Bay
area but will roll it out at more Jamba stores across the United States. It
expects to announce similar line-skipping deals with other companies soon,
Marcus said.

Also on Tuesday, Marcus announced a new partnership with RadioShack Corp.
that will introduce PayPal into all of the electronics retailer's stores
starting this month.

Goodbye, Lotus 1-2-3

The first killer app was VisiCalc. This early spreadsheet turned the Apple
II from a hobbyist toy to a business computer. VisiCalc came with room for
improvement, though. In addition, a new architecture and operating system,
the Intel-based IBM PC and MS-DOS, also needed a spreadsheet to be taken
seriously. That spreadsheet, released in early 1983, would be Lotus 1-2-3,
and it would change the world. It became the PC's killer app, and the
world would never be the same.

On May 14, IBM quietly announced the end of the road for 1-2-3, along with
Lotus Organizer and the Lotus SmartSuite office suite. Lotus 1-2-3's day
is done.
Lotus-123-3.0-MSDOSSay goodbye to Lotus 1-2-3. Its day is finally done.

Far faster than its competition, such as SuperCalc and Microsoft's first
spreadsheet, MultiPlan, Lotus 1-2-3 would become both IBM's and
Microsoft's first killer app. With the opening of the Intel architecture
and MS-DOS to IBM PC clones, Lotus 1-2-3 became the essential application
for the 1980s PC revolution.

Its dominance would be short lived. 1-2-3 would face competition from
programs such as Excel and Quatro Pro that would weaken its hold on the
marketplace by the late 1980s. By the early 1990s, 1-2-3 had fallen into
third place in the eyes of spreadsheet users. It would never recover.

When Microsoft Excel took over clear first place, Lotus was acquired by
IBM in a hostile takeover in 1995. While the expected culture war between
the ultra-liberal Lotus and the buttoned-down IBM never happened, the
acquisition didn't breath any new life into Lotus 1-2-3.

In 2012, IBM started retiring the Lotus brand. Now 1-2-3, the core product
that brought Lotus its fame, takes its turn on the chopping block. IBM
stated, "Effective on the dates listed below, [June 11, 2013] IBM will
withdraw from marketing part numbers from the following product release(s)
licensed under the IBM International Program License Agreement:" IBM

Lotus 123 Millennium Edition V9.x, IBM Lotus SmartSuite 9.x V9.8.0, and Organizer V6.1.0.

Further, IBM stated, "Customers will no longer be able to receive support for these offerings after September 30, 2014. No service extensions will be offered. There will be no replacement programs."

While Lotus' groupware client program Notes and its server component Domino will live on, IBM will no longer be offering any Lotus-branded programs. As for 1-2-3 itself, 30 years after it helped start the personal computing revolution, this essential PC program will be put out to pasture.

UK Court: Lawmaker's Wife's Tweet Was Libelous

A tweet posted by the wife of Britain's parliamentary speaker about a politician wrongly linked to child sex abuse was libelous, the High Court ruled Friday.

A BBC report last year led to widespread Internet chatter that falsely linked politician Alistair McAlpine to decades-old child sex abuse. The broadcaster didn't name McAlpine, but has paid him damages.

Sally Bercow, wife of Speaker John Bercow, said she has settled a libel case brought by McAlpine after the High Court decided that her 2012 tweet naming the politician to her then-56,000 followers was defamatory.

Bercow had previously apologized for the tweet, which read "Why is Lord McAlpine trending? (asterisk)Innocent face(asterisk)." She had denied, however, that the message was defamatory, arguing that it was conversational.

But McAlpine's lawyers had argued that it pointed a "finger of blame" during a media firestorm, and Judge Michael Tugendhat rejected Bercow's stance that the tweet merely posed a question.

Tugendhat said that the words "innocent face" would be understood by any "reasonable reader" as being "insincere and ironical."

Following the judge's ruling, Bercow said she had accepted a previous settlement offer made by McAlpine's lawyers. Bercow didn't disclose the sums involved, but said that it would be an "understatement" to say she was surprised and disappointed by the ruling.

"Today's ruling should be seen as a warning to all social media users," Bercow added. "Things can be held to be seriously defamatory, even when you do not intend them to be defamatory and do not make any express accusation. On this, I have learned my own lesson the hard way."

Teens Migrating to Twitter

Twitter is booming as a social media destination for teenagers who complain about too many adults and too much drama on Facebook, according

to a new study published Tuesday about online behavior. It said teens are sharing more personal information about themselves even as they try to protect their online reputations.

Teens told researchers there were too many adults on Facebook and too much sharing of teenage angst and inane details like what a friend ate for dinner.

"The key is that there are fewer adults, fewer parents and just simply less complexity," said Amanda Lenhart of the Pew Research Center, one of the study's authors. "They still have their Facebook profiles, but they spend less time on them and move to places like Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr."

In the poll, 94 percent of teens who are social media users have a profile on Facebook flat from the previous year. Twenty-six percent of teen social media users were on Twitter. That's more than double the figure in 2011 of 12 percent.

"Facebook just really seems to have more drama," said 16-year-old Jaime Esquivel, a junior at C.D. Hylton High School in Woodbridge, Va., in an interview.

Esquivel said he still checks his Facebook account daily but isn't using it as regularly as in the past. He sees teens complaining on Twitter, too, so Esquivel has been using the photo-sharing service Instagram more often, posting a couple of pictures each day and communicating with friends. Facebook purchased Instagram last year.

In what may be a concern to parents, more than 60 percent of the teens with Twitter accounts said their tweets were public, meaning anyone on Twitter friend, foe or stranger can see what they write and publish. About one-quarter of kids said their tweets were private and 12 percent said they did not know whether their tweets were public or private.

Teens are also sharing much more than in the past.

More than 90 percent of teen social media users said they have posted a picture of themselves up from 79 percent in 2006, the poll said. Seven in ten disclose the city or town where they live, up from about 60 percent over the same time period. And 20 percent disclose their cell phone number up sharply from a mere two percent in 2006.

Even so, Parry Aftab, an attorney and online child safety advocate, says kids seem to be exercising more caution about their posts.

"They are sharing. This is their life," Aftab said in an interview. "But they tend to be sharing personal stuff far better than they ever did before."

The poll suggested teens are also taking steps to protect their reputations and mask information they don't want others to see. For example, nearly 60 percent of teen social media users said they have deleted or edited something that they had published. Just over half the teens have deleted comments from others on their profile or account.

The researchers surveyed 802 parents and their 802 teens. The poll was conducted between July 26 and September 30, 2012, on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 4.5 percentage points.

Why The Internet Sucks You in Like a Black Hole

"Checking Facebook should only take a minute."

Those are the famous last words of countless people every day, right before getting sucked into several hours of watching cat videos, commenting on Instagrammed sushi lunches, and Googling to find out what ever happened to Dolph Lundgren.

If that sounds like you, don't feel bad: That behavior is natural, given how the Internet is structured, experts say.

People are wired to compulsively seek unpredictable payoffs like those doled out on the Web. And the Internet's omnipresence and lack of boundaries encourage people to lose track of time, making it hard to exercise the willpower to turn it off.

"The Internet is not addictive in the same way as pharmacological substances are," said Tom Stafford, a cognitive scientist at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom. "But it's compulsive; it's compelling; it's distracting."

Humans are social creatures. As a result, people enjoy the social information available via email and the Web.

Email and social media have the same reward structure as that of a casino slot machine: Most of it is junk, but every so often, you hit the jackpot   in the case of the Internet, a tidbit of juicy gossip or a heartfelt email, Stafford said. The instantaneous payoff only strengthens the Internet's pull.

The Web's unpredictable payoffs train people much in the same way Ivan Pavlov trained dogs, which were conditioned in the 19th century to salivate when they heard a bell they associated with food.

Over time, people link a cue (e.g., an instant-message ping or the Facebook homepage) with a pleasurable rush of feel-good brain chemicals. People become habituated to seek that social rush over and over again, Stafford said.

Reading emails or hunching over a screen can also activate humans' fight-or-flight response, said Linda Stone, a researcher who has studied the physiological effects of Internet use.

Stone has shown that about 80 percent of people temporarily stop breathing or breathe shallowly when they check their email or look at a screen   a condition she calls email apnea.

The Web often has important content that requires action or a response   for example, an assignment from the boss or engagement photos from a close friend   so people anticipate this and hold their breath as they look at their screens.

But breath-holding sets off a physiological cascade that prepares the body to face potential threats or anticipate surprises. Constantly activating this physical response can have negative health consequences, Stone said.

Another reason the Internet is so addictive is it lacks boundaries between tasks, Stafford said.

Someone may set out to "research something, and then accidentally go to Wikipedia, and then wind up trying to find out what ever happened to Depeche Mode," Stafford said, referring to the music band.

Studies suggest willpower is like a muscle: It can be strengthened, but can also become exhausted.

Because the Internet is always "on," staying on task requires constantly flexing that willpower muscle, which can exhaust a person's self-control.

"You never get away from the temptation," Stafford said.

For those who want to loosen the viselike grip of the Web on their lives, a few simple techniques may do the trick.

Web-blocking tools that limit surfing time can help people regain control over their time. Another method is to plan ahead, committing to work for 20 minutes, or until a certain task is complete, and then allowing five minutes of Web surfing, Stafford said.

"Technology is all about eroding structure," Stafford told LiveScience. "But actually, psychologically, we need more structure, and those things are in tension."

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